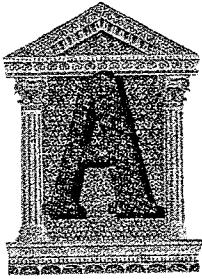


The Age of Augustus 14



New Beginning When Julius Caesar was assassinated another civil war broke out. After 13 years of fighting, Octavian, the great nephew of Julius Caesar, managed to become sole ruler of Rome and all its provinces.

This was no easy task. Octavian had to defeat Brutus and Cassius, the conspirators who had killed Caesar. He also had to defeat Mark Antony, who was romantically and militarily allied with the queen of Egypt, Cleopatra. By A.D. 27, however, Octavian had eliminated all of these rivals and established himself as the first Roman emperor. To celebrate this achievement, the Roman Senate named him Caesar Augustus.

Although Augustus was related to Julius Caesar, the two men were very different. Unlike his great uncle, Augustus was not considered good looking. His teeth were small, dirty, and widely separated. He wasn't interested in what he wore or how he looked. He wasn't tall, and from the time he was young, he had suffered from bad health. Although he was a busy man, he hated getting up early. He would sleep as late and as long as possible.

Augustus was also different from Julius Caesar in another important way. Julius Caesar had been a brave soldier but a bad administrator. Augustus avoided battle as much as possible and was never known as a good soldier, but he turned out to be a very good administrator.

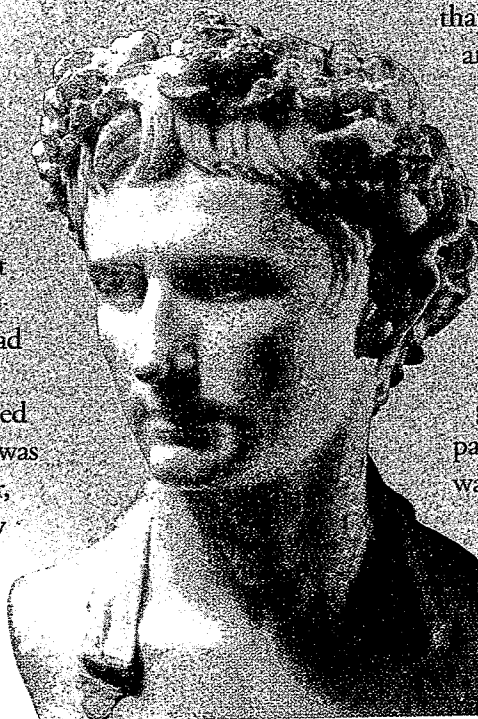
Augustus realized that Romans had stopped feeling proud of themselves and their empire. They

had been through years of warfare, and it must have seemed like the government didn't care about them. Augustus knew that for the Roman Empire to be strong, Romans had to believe in it. So he made some changes.

To restore Romans' confidence, Augustus began an ambitious building program. He brought architects, sculptors, and artists to Rome to create beautiful buildings. He had his architects copy the majesty of Greek architecture and art. His buildings were often made of marble and spared no expense. He built great arches celebrating events in Roman history and had statues of great Romans made. All of this helped to promote his image of Rome as the capital of an empire

that stood for order, strength, honor, and permanence. Romans could be proud. Later, Augustus would boast that he had "inherited [the city of Rome] brick and left it marble."

Augustus rebuilt the temples and re-established the religion of the Romans so that people could believe in the old gods and goddesses again. By making religion part of being a good citizen, Augustus was giving Romans a sense of identity. He helped them figure out who they were and what they believed, and he gave them the feeling that they were part of something great. After years of chaos, Rome had a new beginning.



This marble bust of Augustus was created about 30–20 B.C.



Virgil

As part of his program to make Romans proud of again, Augustus encouraged the arts. Like wealthy rulers before and after him (including Pericles), he became a patron of the arts.

Maecenas (mye SEE nus), one of the friends of Augustus and a rich and important politician, was also a patron of the arts. For years he invited poets to write about Augustus and all he was doing for the empire. One of the poets he talked to was a man named Publius Vergilius Maro, known as Virgil.

Like the other Roman poets at this time, Virgil admired Greek poetry and imitated its style. He wanted to write a great poem that would celebrate the glory of Rome, but he disagreed with Maecenas' suggestion that the poem should be mainly about Augustus. Virgil had a different idea.

The Aeneid

The poem that Virgil wrote for Augustus and Maecenas is called the *Aeneid* (ee NEE ihd). It is the greatest epic poem produced in Ancient Rome. The *Aeneid* tells the story of Aeneas (ee NEE us), a great warrior who survived the defeat of the Trojans during the Trojan War and who journeyed across the Mediterranean to found Rome. All along the way, Aeneas ran into obstacles and temptations. For instance, a beautiful queen of Carthage named Dido fell in love with him and tried to get him to stay with her. But Aeneas knew that it was his destiny to establish a great city in Italy, so he left Dido heartbroken and continued on. Aeneas refused to allow anything to stand between him and his destiny.

Virgil died before he completed the *Aeneid*, but his epic poem is still a great piece of literature as well as a powerful piece of Roman propaganda. The *Aeneid* gave the Romans an exciting past and a national hero, and it taught them that Rome was worth the sacrifices that Aeneas had made.

Augustus was excited about Virgil's poem and begged to see parts of it as the poet worked on it. Even though it wasn't a poem about him, Augustus knew that the *Aeneid* was exactly the

kind of literature he wanted. He knew that this poem glorified Rome and would make the citizens love the Roman Empire.

Law and Order

Unlike Julius Caesar, who had shortsightedly forgotten how many Romans would hate a king or any other absolute ruler, Augustus always remembered how easy it would be for someone to assassinate him. So he took care to include the Senate in the responsibilities of ruling. He never gave up power and never believed in democracy, but he was careful about how he ruled. Augustus avoided Julius Caesar's mistake of being arrogant. He modestly called himself the princeps (PRIHN keps), or "first citizen." The Senate gave him another title—that of Imperator, or emperor, meaning "he who commands."

During his reign as emperor, Augustus accomplished several things. Among the greatest of these was the strengthening of Roman law. Augustus made it clear that, while he was a powerful ruler, the law limited his power. The Senate and other Roman leaders knew that he had some responsibilities and they had other responsibilities. This helped to establish confidence in the emperor and in Roman rule.

Augustus also changed the way the military was run. He divided the army into two parts. The first part was made up of 30 legions of Roman citizens. This amounted to about 165,000 troops in total. Each legion was commanded by a senator who had to report to more powerful senators. This system was meant to ensure that no individual senator would control an army strong enough to attack Rome.

The second part of the army was made up of men who were not Roman citizens. They were commanded by noblemen and divided into sections that were smaller than the legions. Men who were not from wealthy or powerful families could serve in this part of the army and make good careers for themselves.

In the past the Roman army had been supported by the plunder it gathered after victories. Augustus changed this as well. Generals and

soldiers could still get rich from the plunder they took, but the army would be supported and supplied by Rome. Augustus established a special treasury just for the army. This meant that generals had to depend on Rome for supplies. They would be less likely to want to turn on Rome because if they did so, they would have their supplies cut off. By making these changes, Augustus was trying to ensure that there would never be another Julius Caesar to threaten Rome—or any other rivals to threaten Augustus himself.

By this time, the empire had become about as large as it could be. Despite good Roman roads, it could take more than a year to cross it. So now the army was mainly used to keep order.

Law and order brought peace to the Roman Empire. Called the **Pax Romana**, or Roman peace, this was a time of calm and law throughout the Mediterranean world. It would last nearly 200 years.

Such a long time of peace had never been experienced within an empire before. Centuries later, people from many different parts of the world would admire the Pax Romana and try to achieve something similar in their own countries.

Caesar Augustus was the first emperor of the Roman Empire. He established the empire and ruled it well. He understood how to work with the Senate, how to help citizens feel proud of Rome, and how to use the army to keep a peace that lasted for centuries. For all of these reasons, Augustus is remembered as one of Rome's greatest leaders.

vocabulary

Pax Romana the period of peace and order throughout the Roman Empire that lasted for nearly 200 years and began with the first emperor, Caesar Augustus

At its height, the Roman Empire stretched over 2 million square miles.

Growth of the Roman Empire

